

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Statement of Chairman Bennie G. Thompson*****SBI net: Does it Pass the Border Security Test?***

March 18, 2010 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Chairman Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the Subcommittee on Border, Maritime, and Global Counterterrorism and Subcommittee on Management, Investigations, and Oversight joint hearing entitled *SBI net: Does it Pass the Border Security Test?*:

"I am pleased that while the Department is undergoing its analysis of the SBI net program, we are also conducting very rigorous oversight and holding hearings regarding the viability of this costly effort.

This Committee has conducted 11 hearings on SBI-related issues in an effort to ensure that taxpayer funds are being properly utilized for the execution of this program.

On Tuesday, Secretary Napolitano announced that the Department of Homeland Security is freezing all SBI net funding until a full and comprehensive assessment of the program has been conducted.

It is vitally important to the security of this country that we continue to utilize technology at our borders.

However, based on the reasons given by the Secretary for reaching her decision – continued and repeated delays of SBI net and its exorbitant cost – I agree with the Secretary's decision to take a closer look at SBI net to determine whether it is a viable option for securing our borders.

Approximately four years ago, DHS awarded a contract to Boeing to help secure our nation's borders by using technology to create a "virtual fence."

Four years and a half years and over \$800 million later, we are still without an effective technological tool to secure our borders.

Even more troubling, we are now faced with the question of whether this program should even proceed.

The Government Accountability Office (GAO) has pointed out time and time again the reasons the taxpayers have not seen a true return on their investment.

From poor planning and testing, to inadequate oversight and user input, we could go on and on about what this Administration inherited.

Today, GAO is releasing yet another report on the program.

This report, which focuses on the testing of SBI net systems, once again reveals that SBI net has more problems than solutions.

For example, according to the report, from March 2008 to July 2009, over 1,300 defects were found in SBI net systems.

During that same time, the number of new defects being uncovered grew at a faster rate than the ability to fix those that had already been found.

Moreover, more than 70% of the testing procedures were rewritten as they were being executed

because the procedures that had been approved were not adequate.

This type of “on the fly” management, lacks the quality and assurance that is needed to ensure effective testing and calls into question whether the results would have been worse had these changes not been made.

Furthermore, Border Patrol operators, the ultimate users of SBInet, found, among other things, that the radar systems were inaccurate; many of the cameras were operationally insufficient; and the quality of the video feed was blurry and inconsistent.

As a result, further delays, on top of the delays the program has already experienced, are expected. There is a saying that goes: how you practice is how you perform.

If the test results are an indication of how SBInet will perform, we will be exactly where we were four years ago – that is without an effective technological solution for identifying, deterring, and responding to illegal breaches at and between border ports of entry.

Let me also note that I am extremely displeased with the fact that \$833 million has been spent on SBInet, without the full utilization of small businesses.

Both the number of small businesses and small disadvantaged businesses that were used were below target.

Moreover, women-owned small businesses, in addition to service-connected disabled veteran-owned small businesses were significantly below the target rate. This is unacceptable.

I am especially interested in hearing from Boeing on this issue.”

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